The Southern PATRIOT

Special Supplement | Nashville, Tennessee | May, 1945

Nation Pays Tribute to Hugo Black

THE WHITE HOUSE

March 24, 1945

Dear Senator Barkley:

Alias "Dear Alben".

It seems to me a wise thing in these times to revive the public memory of the fundamental liberalism of Thomas Jefferson by honoring, in his name, a living southern liberal for distinguished service to the nation. Hugo L. Black deserves such honor. His own career has served to translate from history to public service the meaning of Jefferson's devotion to the rights of man.

May I join in this reaffirmation of Jefferson's liberalism in your tribute to a living public servant. America owes much to the South, and certainly not the smallest part of its debt is the heritage of the free mind and the liberal, democratic faith which we associate with the great Jefferson.

We never needed that faith more than now. A South which could lead once again in such a faith would serve not only itself, but, as once before long ago, the freedom and dignity of all men everywhere.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black of Alabama received a tribute from the nation at the dinner given in his honor at the Hotel Statler, Washington, on April 3, where he was awarded the Thomas Jefferson medal by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, given to the Southerner making the year's outstanding contribution to the progress of the nation.

Among the speakers at the dinner, attended by one thousand prominent Washingtonians, were: Judge Fred M. Vinson, Director of War Mobilization; Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt; Judge Sherman Minton; Dr. Frank P. Graham, President of the University of North Carolina; Senator Claude Pepper and Mr. Charles Houston of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Senator Alben Barkley was toastmaster.

Dr. Clark Foreman, President of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, presented the Thomas Jefferson Award to Justice Black, "as a man whose life and work are the expression of the finest liberalism of the South, and yet whose wide horizon knows no bounds of section, race or creed". Justice Black received the award for the second time, the first seven years ago for his outstanding contribution in the United States Senate, and on this occasion, in honor of his defense of democracy and the common man on the highest court of the nation.

Honoring Justice Black at the speakers' table were: Justice Wiley Rutledge, Justice Frank Murphy, Justice Stanley Reed and Justice William O. Douglas, as well as Judge James F. Byrnes, Secretary Harold Ickes, Secretary Frances Perkins, Philip Murray, Daniel J. Tobin and Dr. Channing Tobias.

The Dinner Committee was headed by Oscar L. Chapman, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and including as Honorary Vice-Chairmen: President Truman, Secretary Henry Wallace, Senator Elbert D. Thomas, Msgr. John A. Ryan, Dean William H. Hastie, Dr. Frank P. Graham, Barney Whatley, Mrs. Mary M. Bethune, Judge Jerome Frank, and Lowell Mellett.

Among the sponsors of the dinner were: Secretary Edward R. Stettinius, Secretary James Forrestal, Secretary Francis Biddle, Secretary Claude Wickard and Secretary Frank Walker; Senators Robert Wagner, Wayne Morse, James Mead, Scott Lucas and Joseph Guffey; Representative Estes Kefauver, David Lilienthal, Maury Maverick, William Clayton, Clifford Durr, Sidney Hillman, James G. Patton, Dr. Homer Rainey, Nelson Poynter, Jennings Perry, Josephus Daniels and Dr. Rufus Clement.

Black's Record Hailed

Excerpts from Dinner Addresses and Messages—

Dr. Frank P. Graham

President, University of North Carolina

Honorary President, Southern Conference for Human Welfare

I am very glad to be here tonight as a member of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare to speak our acknowledgment as Southerners, our pride as Southerners, in the life and career of Mr. Justice Black. I shall confine my remarks mainly to his work in behalf of the common man. So many millions of common men live in the South . . .

This great Justice in the midst of our southern and national modern industrial society places in the middle of it all, not mechanisms but personality, not machines, but human beings, not the fictions and symbols of the law but the economic realities and social needs of the common people, not the dividends of today but the children of tomorrow, for after all there is the kingdom that is to come.

Judge Fred M. Vinson

Director of War Mobilization

Senator Black did not accept part and parcel the established order of things. He insisted on looking beneath the surface to the underlying realities. He demanded that the people's heritage of natural resources be preserved as a public trust, to be developed in the common interest. This insistence bore fruit in TVA. He relentlessly exposed the efforts of powerful lobbies to pervert the processes of popular government; and this exposure assisted in the passage of corrective legislation.

At a time when collective bargaining was regarded by many as inconsistent with the American way of life, he insisted upon legislative protection for the rights of men in factory and mine, to associate themselves together for mutual aid and defense of their economic interests. This insistence bore fruit in the labor legislation which is now accepted as the foundation-rock of national labor policy. At a time when the abolition of the sweatshop was regarded by many as unconstitutional, Senator Black pioneered in the preparation and introduction of legislation to protect the common man against wages, hours and working conditions inconsistent with the basic premises of economic democracy. This work bore fruit, in the Fair Labor Standards Act, which bears his name, and which alone would have earned for him the grateful remembrance of all humble folk who live by toil and sweat. . . .

It is especially appropriate that these ceremonies should take place under the auspices of a Southern Conference for Human Welfare. A passion for human welfare is woven like a thread through Hugo Black's entire life.

Likewise he has been a pre-eminent Southerner. Every man is the product of his environment, and even those of us who live somewhat closer to the Mason and Dixon line like to believe that the South cannot fail to leave her imprint on any of her sons. Least of all has it failed to leave its imprint on Hugo Black. He has ever been conscious of his south—of her special social and economic problems, of her peculiar political traditions, of her sensitive and self-conscious pride.

And yet he has never been provincial. He has realized and led in helping his fellow-southerners to realize that the South cannot fulfill her destiny in isolation or in withdrawal from the destiny of the nation. Rather, he has struggled to obtain for the South a fuller heritage and a fuller opportunity to contribute to the enlargement and enrichment of that heritage.

Thus he has transcended the limitations of sectionalism and established himself as an unmistakably Southern but genuinely national statesman.

Mr. Charles H. Houston

Attorney, Vice-President, American Council on Race Relations

Justice Black has grown to be a great stabilizing force in the Negro's struggle for equal rights and an inspiration to all forces striving to achieve true democracy in America . . .

Mr. Justice Black's record on the United States Supreme Court is its own testimonial. Invariably he has taken the stand, whether it involved denial to Negroes of equal educational opportunity, jury service, equal accommodations in public transportation, exercise of the franchise, picketing for jobs or fair representation of minority rights under collective bargaining statutes, that constitutional guarantees must be respected . . . The constitution under his interpretation is a dynamic influence fostering, and not choking, all reasonable attempts of the people to adapt governmental controls to the variable conditions and complexities of modern life.

The greatest compliment I can pay to Mr. Justice Black is to say that he is a southerner who is sufficiently sure of himself, who is sufficiently sure of the South and its people, who believes in democracy so deeply, that he is willing to give the future its chance.

Justice Black receives Thomas Jefferso
Justice Black, Dr. Foreman, Judge Vinson.

President Ha

I regret very much that the situation dinner honoring Justice Black. I think ve country is to be congratulated on the fact the Supreme Court. The honor which he Again, I am sorry I cannot be with you.

Mr. Willi

President, American

I regret that because of my absence fro to join with the friends of Justice Black testimonial dinner which will be given in his

Please be assured that I share with all pleasure and satisfaction which they exper him through the presentation of the Thomas American. Democracy is a living, vital forc this principle during all the years he has se

Mrs. Mary Mc

President, National Co

Vice-Chairman, Southern Co

Our South has wisely honored itself in your accomplishments. We have watched y privileged to witness the ceremony when y the Supreme Court. I breathed a prayer express it. That prayer has been answered decisions have been clear, courageous and f

We of the South, we the people of Americ lations and our lasting confidence.

Chaplain A

We invoke Thy blessing, dear God, upo men and women with dreams, who are not but are ever on the quest after better thing with them so that they continue to bring t the sum of the world's happiness. . .

efferson Award. Left to right, Senator Barkley, inson.

Harry S. Truman

uation developed so I could not appear for the ink very highly of Justice Black, and I think the e fact that we have a man like Justice Black on ch he is receiving is one that he justly deserves. ou.

Villiam Green

rican Federation of Labor

nce from Washington it will be impossible for me Black in paying him a deserved tribute at the n in his honor at the Hotel Statler on April 3. ith all the friends of Justice Black the feeling of experience over the high honor conferred upon Thomas Jefferson Award. Justice Black is a great tal force to him. He has reflected his devotion to has served in a public capacity.

McLeod Bethune

al Council of Negro Women
n Conference for Human Welfare

self in being able to recognize your worth and tched your career with great satisfaction. I was when you took the oath of office as a member of prayer for your sense of justice and courage to swered. You have stood on the square and your s and forthright.
America, tonight bring our affectionate congratu-

ain Aryeh Lev

od, upon this Conference and all its supporters, are not content with a sordid and dull existence r things, nobler tasks and keener aims. Be ever bring their blessings to others and thus increase . . . . . *Invocation.*

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt

I know that all of us here are deeply conscious of the service which Justice Black has rendered to the liberal causes which everybody here honors in his heart, and we are happy, therefore, to do him honor tonight. We are happy that the Southern Conference for Human Welfare has given Justice Black this award. The Thomas Jefferson Award must mean a great deal, I think, to any Southerner because Thomas Jefferson, to all of us who believe in liberal ideas in this country, will always be the great leader of our early days, who still remains the great leader of those who want justice for the common man, justice for all the people and a chance to earn a good life, a chance to stand equally as citizens of the United States, for all the people of this country.

So, Justice Black, I am very happy to have the chance to say to you, as my husband did, how happy he is for your honor tonight, in which we all take pride.

Judge Sherman Minton

Circuit Court of Appeals

Senator Black came to the Senate with the experience of a great trial lawyer, and bearing in his sensitive nature deep seared the scars left from his experience among the tenant farmers of the hill country and the wage slaves of industry. He knew it was power in the hands of the few that was responsible for the oppression of the many and the ever grinding down of the weak, the poor and unorganized masses. . .

Power in the hands of the few always leads to the oppression of the many. That was his yardstick. Economic power in the hands of the few meant slavery. He knew that the War between the States had freed the Negroes, but it had not abolished slavery on the cotton plantations and in the lumber mills and factories of the South, any more than it had in the sweat shops of the New York garment workers, the New England textile mills and the coal mines of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky. Wherever men used power to oppress his fellows, Senator Black would use whatever power he possessed to break that oppression. He had fought the good fight of liberalism at every turn of his senatorial career.

He has been slow to interfere with the acts of state legislatures when only property interests were involved, but he has voted to strike down state legislation in a high percentage of cases where civil rights and liberties were involved... He has been quick to leave state courts to declare and apply their own law where life or liberty were not involved, but he strikes with a furious blow a violation of one's civil liberties... He respects a jury's verdict with a fidelity heretofore unknown when the issue is damages, but no jury's findings binds him when the powerful oppress the weak, poor and friendless or the victims of passion, discrimination or prejudice.

Senator Claude Pepper

United States Senator

The Southern Conference for Human Welfare has chosen well to honor the greatest Southerner since the birth of Woodrow Wilson, in Hugo L. Black. Hugo Black will be remembered not as a radical, but as a conservator, a conservator of human values, of those things of the body and the mind and the spirit and of our resources which last forever in the indissoluble and indestructible quality of the good.

Hugo Black represents the South, for in its heart the South feels as Hugo Black feels. Yes, it has been choked and stifled, and it has been belied and misunderstood, but the throbbing heart of the South is proud of Hugo Black and down deep they cherish the aspiration that his tribe may increase.

Senator Alben Barkley

United States Senator

I greatly appreciate the honor accorded me by the suggestion that I act as Toastmaster at this testimonial dinner to Justice Hugo Black. I came into the Senate with him on the 4th of March, 1927. Not only did we become great personal friends, but we became identified during his entire incumbency in the Senate with what we have come to call liberalism in government. . . .

I wish to congratulate the Southern Conference for Human Welfare for the great work it has done, is doing and will continue to do.

Msgr. John O'Grady

We thank Thee for the strength Thou has given to this nation and its leaders in this the most critical period of its history. We thank Thee especially this evening for the many favors Thou hast given to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. The objectives of this Conference are especially dear to Thy divine heart. They are a reflection in human relations of Thy Fatherhood and of the brotherhood of all men in Thee. This Conference accepts the principle that every human personality is a reflection of the Divine . . . We ask that we may be granted the strength and the courage to carry on with a new vigor, a new determination in a sacred cause which transcends all human values. Amen. . . . . *Benediction.*